**Accessibility on Twitter**

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# **Introduction**

Thank you for agreeing to take over the [Twitter link] [@DisInHigherEd Twitter account](https://twitter.com/DisInHigherEd)! We are looking forward to seeing your stories and content. This guide is just a quick overview of how a Twitter takeover works (in case you are not familiar) and how to maximize the accessibility of your content!

# **What is an account takeover about?**

A Twitter takeover is where someone logs into the Twitter account and assumes ownership of the account for a set period of time. The person who takes over the account may post whatever they want as long as the content adheres to our community guidelines and [document link] [Code of Conduct](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TxfsjdQzj-iLrtEofOVPIw3_LoHVcvE1dUn5wHwHUtg/edit?usp=sharing). We also expect any posts published to adhere to accessibility standards to the best of your ability.

# **Community Guidelines**

Given that disability can affect anyone, we aim to provide a platform that shows the intersectionality of disability. We hope that all marginalised identities will feel that this is a safe space.

We do not discriminate based on race, sex, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, disability, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other socioeconomic status. Anyone who agrees to take over the Twitter account or post on behalf of Disabled in Higher Ed, agrees to uphold these values.

The lives and experiences of disability are not universal and can vary. Everyone in the Disabled in Higher Ed community is welcome to share their experiences. We expect everyone in the community to treat each other with respect, even when their experiences and opinions may differ.

This code of conduct may not cover every situation, but it is intended as a guide for our community. We hope it shows that Disabled in Higher Ed is committed to safety and inclusion of all.

# **Glossary for this Guide**

## Alt text (Alternative text)

Alt text is the written description of an image, graphic, gif or similar that screen-reading tools use to describe images to visually impaired readers. Also called alt tags or alt descriptions.

To learn more about how to add alt-text to images on Twitter, check out the following guide on [“How to make images accessible for people”](https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/picture-descriptions), which contains instructions for apple OS, android OS, and computer web browsers.

## CamelCase

When the first letter of each word in a hashtag is capitalized. For example, #DisabledInSTEM, #ActuallyAutistic, or #BlackLivesMatter.

## Captions

Captions are on-screen text descriptions that display a video’s or visual media’s dialogue, identify speakers, and describe other relevant sounds that are otherwise inaccessible to those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Captions are synchronized with the video images so that viewers have equivalent access to the audio content, whether they receive that content via audio or text.

Captions are open or closed. Open captions are always in view and cannot be turned off. Closed captions can be turned on or off by the viewer.

## Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) converts spoken word into instant text. CART requires the participation of a trained professional who can convert spoken language into text to display. Since CART involves active translation of spoken word to text by a professional, it tends to be more accurate than other captioning services or auto-captioning.

## Neurodiverse/Neurodivergent

An umbrella term to describe people with ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorders, developmental speech disorders, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dynomnia, intellectual disability, Tourette’s syndrome and certain mental health conditions (e.g. bipolar, schizophrenia, antisocial personality disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder).

## Plain Language

It is a writing practice to make important information and ideas more accessible to people with developmental and intellectual disabilities as well as other disabilities that affect reading, comprehension, and other cognitive functions. It is important for cognitive accessibility.

There is no standard for plain language writing. But, it often includes practices such as:

* Using only common words
* Using words with fewer syllables
* Writing only shorter sentences (and including only one idea per sentence)
* Writing shorter paragraphs (with one idea per paragraph and clear topic sentences)
* Using active voice over passive voice
* Cutting back on extra details and personal impressions (unless the writing is descriptive or personally creative)
* Using visually simple fonts (e.g. Arial or Helvetica)
* Including more “white space” in documents.

To learn more about plain language writing, check out the article [“Plain Language Writing - An Essential Part of Accessibility”](https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewpulrang/2020/10/22/plain-language-writing---an-essential-part-of-accessibility/?sh=e07dc627935a), written by Andrew Pulrang.

## Screen-readers

Assistive technology for the visually impaired/hearing and visually impaired that converts content (text, alt text, transcriptions) into speech or braille.

## Subtitles

Like captions, subtitles present audio information in text for videos or other visual media. However, subtitles only present spoken language; they do not contain other auditory information that is present in the video or visual media.

## Transcripts

Transcripts are unsynchronized text descriptions of content. They are similar to closed captions but can also describe visual content along with audio. Transcriptions are important because they allow those who are Deaf, Blind, have cognitive disabilities, and/or other disabilities to enjoy multimedia content.

# **Posts options for Twitter**

* Feed posts – Tweets, Graphics, Questions, Videos, Threads etc..
* Polls
* Live Streams
* Answering questions/messages (DMs) that come in

**Making Twitter Posts Accessible**

## General good practices

Optimize readability by using proper grammar and spelling

* Don’t extend words (e.g.) thiiiiiissssss
* Don’t change letters for numbers in words (e.g.)  w0rds
* Avoid using all uppercase excessively or alternating letters of uppercase and lowercase (e.g.) THIS IS DiFfIcUlT tO rEaD
* Don’t use more than one/two emojis in a row and never put an emoji between every word in a sentence.
* If possible use shortened links (e.g.) use [webpage links] [tiny url](https://tinyurl.com/), [bitly](https://bitly.com/)

## Video content

If using any video content, we ask that you ensure subtitles or open/closed captions are available of what is being said. Subtitles just include the words that are being spoken in the video whereas open or closed captions include the words that are being spoken along with any audible context that may be required (e.g.)[shouting], [a knock on the door].

There are many apps available to place include subtitles or closed captions on videos:

* 1. **InShot** - manual subtitles - most features are free to use
	2. **Autocap -** auto generated subtitles that you can edit -free version available with a logo on video.
	3. **Clipomatic (Apple IOS only) -** costs $5 to download - auto generated subtitles you can edit.
	4. **Subtitle-Horse (PC only) -** online manual subtitles - free to use.

### **Best Practices**

1. Captions are usually better than subtitles since they include descriptions of all auditory information. If there is the option for closed or open captions, closed captions are a better option as it gives people the option for captions to be on or off.
2. Do not rely on automatically generated captions unedited (i.e. auto-captioning). If you can use CART services that is also best. Please ensure that subtitles/ captions are accurate and that you check and edit automatically generated ones.
3. Make sure captions are an appropriate size and font to be easily readable. It is also important to consider whether there is appropriate color contrast between the caption text and the visual images.
4. Make sure captions are placed in a good place that does not block visual content.
5. Not essential – but it is also best practice to provide a text transcript of the captions/ subtitles as a separate downloadable text file or a google document.

## Live streams

Twitter does not have any auto-generated live closed captioning; you need to have your own third-party caption/subtitle generators and/or access to CART services. This third-party software has to be synced to Twitter before you start if you want to do an accessible live stream. We recommend live streams be avoided or used sparingly for this reason.

## Images/ Graphics in Feed posts

### **Alt text**

To ensure accessibility, we ask that all images, graphics, infographics, and gifs include alternative text (alt text). Twitter does not currently provide any automatically generated description for images that do not contain alt text (not that these tend to be very accurate anyway). The steps for writing alt text are as follows:

* Write your tweet as normal.
* Add your visual content.
* Click edit on an image (or the ‘alt text’ button) and describe what the image is displaying. Twitter gives up to 1000 characters for alt text so you can be as descriptive as possible!
* Describe what is in the image/gif – to some, this may seem like a daunting task, so our advice is to describe what is in the image but focus on what is the most relevant. Provide a brief plain language description, with accurate grammar and spelling. Ask questions like:
	+ **Who? What do they look like?**
	+ **What are they wearing?**
	+ **What is happening in the image/gif?**
	+ **If there are people, what are they doing?**
	+ **Is the date/event important?**
	+ **Where is it?**
	+ **Are colours important?**
	+ **Are there different colours signifying different things?**
	+ **Why this image or graphic (is it a graphic advertising something)?**
	+ **If it is a figure what is its purpose?**
	+ **If you want people to take one thing away from this alt text what is it (then center your description over that!).**
* You can apply these questions are relevant to the situation but remember to concentrate on what is the point of the photo - if there is an extensive background to the photo but the main feature is the people in the photo - mention the background but focus on the people, or vice versa.
* Click save
* Send the tweet!

If you need more help with adding alt text to images on Twitter, check out this guide [“How to make images accessible for people”](https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/picture-descriptions).

#### **Best Practices**

1. Use plain language
2. Use good grammar and spelling
3. Be brief – you have 1000 characters for alt text but that does not mean you need to use them all.
4. Concentrate on the point of the photo/graphic/image. Why does it add?
5. It is always best to consider accessibility from the get-go and not as an afterthought. Thus, if you can repost images with alt text, then that’s best.
6. If you are trying to add alt text to existing images that you don’t have access to, then you can always add the alt text as an image description in the text of a tweet.

If you are unsure if an image has alt-text and want to check, several people/groups have created Twitter bots that can extract alt text off images and tweet them out. This includes bots: [Twitter links] [@ImageAltText](https://twitter.com/ImageAltText) and [@get\_alttext](https://twitter.com/get_altText).

To use these bots, all you have to do is comment the name of the bot on a tweet with an image in it. The bot will then tweet out the alt-text associated with that image in a thread under your tweet. However, don’t get confused; these bots don’t add alt text for you. They only can read existing alt text off images. If there is no alt text on that image, then the bot will tweet that the image has no alt text under your comment. This is a good way to check which images have been made accessible on Twitter.

### **Infographics**

Many people forget that infographics are graphics and cannot be read by screen readers. You must provide a description of the content in the alt text or as a text transcript.

If you choose a transcript, you can either create a tweet thread of the text/information in the infographic or provide a link to a website where a text transcript is available to download or a non-editable google doc. If you choose to do this, then just put Infographic titled \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. ‘All text is available in the tweets below this one’ or ‘A text transcription is available for download/read from the link provided in the tweet’. The easiest option for this is a non-editable google document or HTML containing the text content of the infographic.

### **Text Transcripts**

#### **Best Practices**

1. Unlike subtitles/ captions, transcripts are generally separated into paragraphs or sections to maximize readability. If it makes sense, you can group lines of dialogue/text into a paragraph or section.
2. Include descriptions of relevant visual content to provide context. This is usually done by using square brackets to indicate that it is separate from the dialogue, (e.g.) [a phone rings], [a knock on the door].
3. Transcripts can be read while watching the video or by themselves, so if a tone or inflection is needed to understand the context, please indicate it using square brackets (e.g.) [whispering] I’m tired
4. Make the transcript easily available. If you are using videos or infographics on twitter the easiest way to provide a text transcript is using a link to a HTML or google document that cannot be edited.

## Creating Your own Graphics

You can create any graphics or images you wish to use. Canva is an example of a website that has good free to use options, but you can use whatever you are comfortable/familiar with. The main things to consider with graphics are contrast and fonts to maximise readability and as mentioned before, if they are included in a post ensure to write an alt text description or provide a text transcript as necessary.

### **Contrast**

We ask that you think about the contrast between the background and the text. Please refrain from placing texts on top of busy backgrounds if you have not faded the background or placed a block colour behind the text to ensure good readability.

If you are unsure about a graphic you have created then you can use colour contrast tools such as [webpage links] [Contrast checker 1](https://contrastchecker.com/) or [Contrast checker 2](https://contrastchecker.online/) which are both free to use. You can either upload the graphic or enter the hex codes of the colours you are using, and the contrast will be assessed as a pass or a fail. There is also an option with Contrast checker 1 to change your contrast colours to ‘gray-scale’ which assesses how the graphic appears to a colorblind user.

### **Fonts**

We ask that you stick to using fonts with good readability (e.g.) **Comic Sans, Open Sans, Arial, Verdana, Helvetica, Tahoma, Calibri, Montserrat Classic, Raleway, Avent Pro or similar.**

The British Dyslexia Association have completed a Dyslexia friendly style guide which you can view [webpage link] [Dyslexia Friendly Style Guide](https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/advice/employers/creating-a-dyslexia-friendly-workplace/dyslexia-friendly-style-guide)

##  Hashtags

You need to capitalize the first letter of every word in a hashtag, called CamelCase, or else a screen reader will read it out letter by letter. Imagine how annoying that can be! It's something straightforward that makes a big difference.

### Some general academic hashtags:

#PhDChat

#AcademicTwitter

#AcademicChatter

#GradSchool

#GradStudent

#PhDLife

#GradLife

#PhDProblems

#AcademicMentalHealth

Some general Disability Hashtags

#DisabilityTwitter

#DisabilityChat

#DisabilityIsntAShame

#DisabilityVisibilityMatters

#DisabilityVisibility

#DisabilityIsDiverse

#DisabilityRights

Some Disability in Academia Hashtags

#DisabledPhD

#DisabledAcademics

#DisabledInSTEM

#NeurodiverseInSTEM

#AcademicAbleism

#AbleismInAcademia

#AbleistAcademia

#AutisticAcademics

#DisabledAcademicsExist

#WhyDisabledPeopleDropOut

## Emojis

This has already been mentioned in general best practices – ‘Don’t use more than one/two emojis in a row and never put an emoji between every word in a sentence’, but I will elaborate more on this here.

Every single emoji has a text description for screen-readers (and coding). If you use many emojis or place an emoji between every word in a sentence, the screen-reader will read the text description (e.g.) 👏 = clapping hands for that emoji for every single time you’ve used it – again and again – which can cause your post to lose all meaning to those using screen-reader.

Best practice is to use a maximum of two to three different emojis in a row.

## Links

You can post links to outside web pages, blogs, videos, etc… We ask that you try to ensure that all content that you provide links to is accessible, but we understand that this may be out of your control.

If you are posting links in a tweet you can either set the scene for the link (e.g.) by saying ‘I wrote a blog piece on this topic, here it is [insert link]. Or by specifying where it will lead using square brackets before inserting the link (e.g.) [Website], [video], [article], etc. It allows people using screen readers to know what type of content will be encountered by clicking the link.

# **Takeaway points**

* Try your best and have fun!
* Make your takeover as accessible as you can!
* If you get confused or any of this information does not make sense, email disabledinhighered@gmail.com for help.